



Sugar Maple

Acer Saccharum

Characteristics

- The sugar maple is the most abundant of the 7 maple species found in the north eastern hemispheres of America. Usually growing between 60-100 ft in height (late bloomer) and 3-4 in diameter. It is a deciduous tree that can reach the age of 400 years.

Leaves

- The leaves of the Sugar Maple are oppositely arranged and simple. They are palmately lobed with usually 5 lobes, but could also possess 3 or 4. The leaves have a two-toned color, dark green on top, with a slightly paler green underneath. The size can reach up to 5 inches in length. And the U-shaped connection between lobes helps identify it from other maples.

Roots

- This maple is very versatile because it can grow and live a health life in nearly any soil type except a swamp environment. Their root systems have been compared to a hydraulic lift because they are able to absorb water from lower soil layers and spread the water to upper, dried up soil.

Fruit

- The fruit is a double samara, which resembles a helicopter when falling from the tree. This whirly action allows the fruit to spread easily. Seed are ripe when they turn yellowish green and fall usually just before the leaves do.

Problems

- All trees are exposed to things that can damage them, whether it is diseases or insects. The sugar maple is relatively healthy when it comes to diseases and insects, but the main problem associated with them comes from human activity. Because of the trees sensitivity to high sodium levels, many sugar maples in areas where street salt is being uses, are beginning to die. This has lead to the expanded use of the Norway Maple, which is much more tolerant to human involvement.

Uses

- The first use of the Sugar Maple that comes to mind is maple syrup. But there are plenty of other uses for this tree. The timber is valuable because of the hardness and density. Used in making various musical instruments and furniture

Flowers

- Greenish yellow in long drooping clusters. Only one sex is functional with each flower, but both sexes are typically produced within the crown of the tree. Pollination occurs both by bees and natural pollination.

Exam Question: The Sugar Maple leaf is featured on what country's national flag?

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